SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES OF LIS PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN KARNATAKA STATE: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF 21ST CENTURY

SYNOPTIC REPORT SUBMITTED FOR THE APPROVAL OF TITLE REGISTRATION TO KARNATAKA STATE AKKAMAHADEVI WOMEN UNIVERSITY, VIJAYAPURA FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

SUBMITTED BY

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2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology, information overload and changing demands of modern academic environments have brought a remarkable transformation in 21st century Library and Information profession. Traditionally libraries were only store houses of books, journals and periodicals and librarians were managers of those physical reading materials to support academic activities of students and faculty of the organization. However, the digital era marked by information explosion and technological swift has significantly changed the landscape higher education libraries and role of librarians. Today, University libraries are playing as a central hub with creation, dissemination and access to the wider ecosystem of knowledge and they are anticipated to be key players in promoting research, managing intellectual property and driving knowledge sharing initiatives across various academic disciplines. With the rise of new technologies such as cloud computing, digital archives and wider use of online databases, university libraries are now expected to provide wide variety of information services that extend beyond their traditional functions. This evolving landscape of libraries requires acquisition of new skills, knowledge and abilities for library and information science (LIS) professionals to effectively support the academic goals and objectives of their institution.

21st century has brought exceptional transformations in the creation, organizations, access and dissemination of information, largely driven by the quick development in information and communication technology and university libraries are undergoing a significant changes as they are becoming dynamic and technology-enabled knowledge centers. In this evolving digital environment, LIS professionals need to be proficient in information technology, including library automation, digitization, networking, web 2.0, online data management and more, as libraries shifting towards online and digital platforms to meet the growing demands of patrons so, it is crucial to assess how LIS professionals adapting to these evolving changes and skills and competencies they need to acquire in order to serve 21st century library landscape. The present study aims to explore the skills and competencies adopted by LIS professionals working in university libraries in Karnataka state by understanding the role of LIS professionals of university libraries, examining the challenges and opportunities they face and how these changes are affecting the quality of service libraries give to users.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 International studies

Shah and others (2024) through their qualitative study "Exploration of LIS Professionals efforts in Pakistan towards the improvements of technological competencies in 21st century" investigated and suggested a framework of required skills for LIS professionals in the 21st century by

conducting an in-depth interview among 22 LIS professionals from Pakistan and 10 international professionals. The study highlights the importance of diverse competencies such as subject knowledge and skills, Information technology proficiency, instructional and research skills, managerial and leadership abilities and social skills.

Agava and Underwood (2020) made a study to evaluate ICT fluency among Tangaza University College (TUC) library professionals in Kenya by adopting a qualitative research design with a single case study. The findings of the study revealed that most of the TUC library professionals possess high competence in basic ICT and some web technologies but lack advanced ICT technical skills. The study suggests librarians to participate in ICT focused training programs and emphasizes the importance of inclusion of ICT elements in LIS curriculum.

Mansour (2017) assessed digital information literacy skills among LIS professionals of South Valley University library. The study explained that digital information literacy skills of LIS professionals have significant relationship with their professional characteristics, their discipline, job title and work experience. Lack of funds, training, physical facilities, internet connection, e-databases subscription and lack of time are found to be some of the challenges affecting respondents in acquiring related skills and competencies.

Farooq and others (2016) identified LIS professional's perception towards their current and required competencies by conducting a survey among LIS professionals working at public university libraries in Pakistan. Their skills at present level are below than the required level and there is no significant correlation between their job experience, job grade and skills of university librarians.

Okeji, Tralagba and Obi and (2020) focused on the digital literacy skills possessed by both public and private university librarians in Nigeria which will help to frame needed competencies for LIS professionals. It also highlighted the areas of knowledge and competence they viewed as strong and those they viewed as weak. Librarians generally viewed their knowledge of networking and system security and their ability to use firewalls and filtering routers as average and insufficient. Overall, the findings of the study shown almost half of the librarians possess moderate level of digital literacy skills and only few of them possess excellent digital literacy skills.

Khan and Bhatti (2017) explored the essential digital competencies needed for the development and management of digital libraries among university librarians in Pakistan. The study identified three major categories of digital competencies such as competencies for digital library development, competencies for digital library management and competencies for protecting digital contents. The study also highlighted the importance of training programs in enhancing digital competencies of librarians.

Oyieke and Dick (2017) in their study, evaluated web 2.0 competencies possessed by librarians in selected libraries from the KLISC consortium and GAELIC consortium in South Africa respectively. Findings from the qualitative analysis of data indicate that Web 2.0 tools and empowerment of librarians can be used to build interconnection between content collaboration tools, bookmarking tools and social networking sites and findings from the quantitative analysis

of data shown that most librarians possess intermediate level of web 2.0 competencies which are crucial for librarians to provide effective and efficient e-services.

Joel and Ibrahim (2021) pointed out that information technology competencies, interpersonal competencies and leadership competencies are crucial for knowledge management in 21st century libraries based on the survey conducted among librarians of university librarians in Borno state.

EI-Kalash and others (2023) explained library and information science skills for modern librarians and the challenges they face in 21st century and stated need and strategies for upskilling the LIS professionals in their study "Upskilling the Library and Information Science Professionals for Effective Information Service Delivery in the 21st Century Global Economy" in meeting the needs of complex and competitive knowledge societies.

2.2 Indian context

Yadav (2022) identified essential skills and competencies for LIS professionals trough a survey conducted among working alumni of ten LIS schools in India. The study explained 54 different skills in five broad categories such as traditional library skills, research skills, computing skills, data management skills and soft skills which are essential to thrive in LIS profession. It found that computing skills, library automation and digitization skills are crucial for LIS professionals.

Manu and others (2018) gave an overview of core competencies required for library and information science professionals by analyzing core competencies of librarianship developed by the national and international LIS professional associations and networks around the world. The study focused on professional skills and knowledge such as leadership skills, communication skills, knowledge attributes etc. required for LIS professionals working in academic, public and school libraries which helps young LIS professionals to improve required competencies and develop their career.

Salve and Chavan (2018) listed out the skills and competencies for modern LIS professionals that employers seek in candidates based on the survey conducted to analyze various general job portals focusing only on LIS job in India. Analysis of 845 job advertisements identified 42 different skills which were grouped into three broad categories such as LIS professional skills, other professional skills including ICT skills, managerial skills and personal attributes. The study highlights the importance of professional experience, technical proficiency and soft skills demanded in current LIS job market. The findings of the study guide LIS job seekers to develop their skills and competencies. It also serve as a resource for LIS educators to prepare students according to evolving LIS professional demands.

Mojjada and Saroja (2023) explained about required skill set for LIS professionals such as computer literacy, network skills, information retrieval skills, managerial skills, communication skills, preservation skills and other additional skills in changing LIS landscape. The study also covered skill development practices for LIS professionals in the digital age in Indian context.

Ankad (2024) described skills and competencies for LIS professionals in three categories such as personal skills, generic skills and professional skills essential in digital era to frame or refine LIS course curricula. The study described changing role of librarian, challenges they face and recommendations for LIS professionals in the digital age.

Singh (2019) in her study "LIS Education in India: Skills and Competencies for Professionals in Indian Libraries" gives a set of digital library skills and competencies to be included in the LIS curriculum to ensure future librarians are equipped with the essential skills to serve the evolving landscape of libraries. It mentioned number of skills categorized as basic skills, technological skills and management skills that need to be incorporated in LIS students based on future job requirements.

Loganathan, Sekar and Kasirao (2015) examined the challenges libraries face in rapidly evolving technological landscape. The author argues persuasively that libraries are under significant pressure to meet the growing expectations of speed, cost-efficiency and quality in their services. The paper emphasizes on the skill sets required by library professionals in the modern electronic environment by identifying key areas such as digital resource management, data curation, cybersecurity and user experience design. It also recognizes that librarians must go beyond traditional library practices to embrace new technological and managerial competencies.

Vaishnav (2019) provided a comprehensive analysis of capacity building for LIS professionals needed in the evolving digital environment. The study identified knowledge, skills and abilities to be possessed by librarians and suggests for LIS curricular updates to better equip LIS students with the skills and competencies required to sustain in the digital age. Author concludes by stating that both professionals and institutions must anticipate future changes and work on developing the necessary skills and competencies for the survival of the LIS profession.

Sanghmitra (2015) made a comprehensive exploration of the employability of library and information science graduates by focusing on the trends observed over a ten year period at Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. The findings of the study shown that nearly 100% of LIS graduates from the university were employed, reflecting a high demand for skilled professionals in the field. It also identified that communication skills and IT proficiency are essential skills in the current LIS job market. The study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing employability and skills required for LIS professionals to remain competitive in evolving LIS job market.

Raju and Muthu (2019) gave a complete overview of skills and competency, types, benefits, importance and sources to develop competencies of LIS professionals. The paper also has insights on lifelong learning of librarians, trends and changes in library services librarians need to adapt, tasks and responsibilities to perform for library management, importance for capacity building, training and development, significance of customer care and service quality and challenges faced by libraries such as adapting to new technologies and responding to continuously changing user expectations to remain relevant and effective in meeting user needs.

3. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Library is regarded as the heart of any university as they are responsible for supporting teaching, research and other academic programs of the university. Since the dawn of 21st century libraries facing serious transition in almost all information services and this IT based library environment demands new job requirements, roles & responsibilities, various kinds of skills and adequate competencies from the professionals to develop their information products and services. These include skills in library automation, digital resource management, database searching, use of institutional repository software, information retrieval and digital reference services. In addition to technical skills, soft skills such as communication, leadership, adaptability, management competency and continuous learning are also essential to support dynamic academic and research support services. Therefore, it becomes more essential to assess LIS professionals existing skill levels, competencies and future readiness to effectively serve the technology-driven 21st century library environment. An analytical study of these skills and competencies will help in identifying gaps, improving professional standards and developing essential training programs for LIS professionals.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Skills and Competencies of LIS Professionals working in the university libraries in Karnataka State: An analytical study in the context of 21st Century

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to identify and analyze the skills and competencies of LIS professionals working in the university libraries in Karnataka state, the further objectives are as follows:

- To identify the essential skills and competencies that need to be incorporated in LIS professionals in the university libraries of Karnataka.
- To examine the skills and competencies among LIS professionals to handle library and information services in digital era.
- To discuss the changing landscape of library management and capacity building of university libraries in the 21st century.
- To determine the factors that hinder inclusion of skills and competencies of LIS Professionals in the university libraries.

6. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- Skills and competencies of LIS professionals have no bearing on their demographic characteristics, level and nature of work.

- There is no significant relationship between skills and competencies of LIS professionals with their work experience, qualification and designation.
- There is no significant difference in digital and technological skills of LIS professionals based on type of university and the availability of ICT infrastructure.
- There is no significant relationship between training received and competency levels of LIS professionals.

7. RESEARCH DESIGN

Descriptive survey method will be applied for the present study that requires conducting a census survey among LIS Professionals working in the university libraries in Karnataka state by using questionnaire as a data collection tool. The survey responses will be interpreted in descriptive manner and analyzed using statistical software in order to analyze the skills and competencies of LIS professionals working in the university libraries of Karnataka.

8. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The present study focuses on analysing skills and competencies of LIS professionals working in university libraries of all the State government universities, State central university, Private and Deemed to be universities approved by UGC in Karnataka state. The study aims to assess their professional skills, technological skills, digital competencies and other essential skills and competencies required to perform effectively in the modern technology-driven library environment.

9. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the 21st century changing scenario, LIS professionals play a crucial role in managing digital resources, providing access to electronic information resources and teaching, learning and research activities. Therefore, the skills and competencies of LIS professionals have become a key factor in determining the quality and effectiveness of library services. The findings of the study will help in identifying the current level of proficiency in professional, technological and digital competencies among LIS professionals. It will also help to identify the skill gaps and areas where training is required. It is significant for library and university administrators to provide insights into the competency levels of their library staff. Further, the study will be useful for academic institutions, policymakers and professional associations in developing competency frameworks, curriculum improvements and training policies for LIS education and professional development. In addition, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the skills and competencies of LIS professionals working in the university libraries across Karnataka state.

10. SCHEME OF CHAPTERIZATION

The present study will be organized as the following five main chapters:

Chapter I- Introduction: This chapter gives introduction for the present research. It also explains about need and significance of the study. Research problem is stated, objectives, research design, scope and limitation and hypothesis for the study are framed and important concepts present in the study are also defined in this part.

Chapter II- Review of Literature: Related literature will be reviewed to get background knowledge and to find research gap discussed briefly in this chapter in Indian and international context.

Chapter III- Skills and Competencies of LIS Professionals: Different types of skills and competencies needed for LIS professionals to serve in the 21st century will be explained in this chapter.

Chapter IV- Data Analysis and Interpretation: This chapter is devoted to analysis and interpretation of collected data to test hypothesis.

Chapter V- Suggestions and Conclusion: Suggestions will be given based on analysis made for collected data and conclusion for the whole study in presented.

References: A list of references will be given.

Appendix: A questionnaire shall be provided.

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